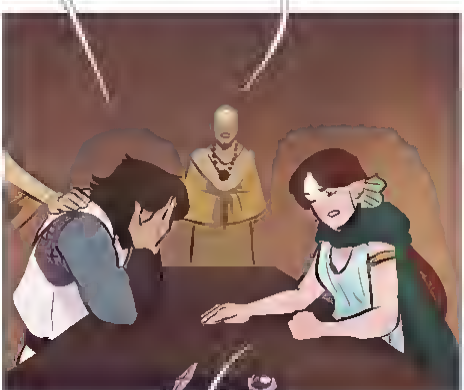
COME NOW, MAN. THIS WAS NOT YOUR FAULT
IF NOT FOR ME. THEY WOULD STILL BE ALIVE

HOW CAN YOU FAIL TO SEE THAT THE BLAME LIES UPON MY SHOULDERS?

MATTHEW. NONE COULD HAVE PREDICTED SUCH AN OUTCOME.



YOU FORCED NO ONE. WE ALL AGREED TO THIS WILLINGLY. AND THE PRIESTS DID SO TOO.

BUT THE HIGH PRIEST, HE WARNED ME--

HE DID. AND HE PROCEEDED DESPITE HIS MISGIVINGS FOR HE KNEW YOURS TO BE A NOBLE AND WORTHY CAUSE.

HE AND HIS PEOPLE MADE THE DECISION TO HELP US

WE SHOULD CEASE LAMENTING THEIR DEATHS. LET NOT THEIR SACRIFICE BE IN VAIN. PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER. THERE IS MUCH WORK TO BE DONE.

YES. FORGIVE ME.

WE MUST OVERSEE THE BURIALS OF THE PRIESTS AND MAKE CERTAIN THE REMAINING MAGEIANS ARE COMPENSATED FOR THEIR LOSS.

BUT AFTER THAT, WHAT ARE WE TO DO NOW THAT WE HAVE THESE?
TRUE! WILL THIS BE PERMANENT?

DID YOU NOT LISTEN TO THE HIGH PRIEST? THERE IS STILL A PART OF THE RITUAL LEFT TO DO!

I DID HEAR HIM, BUT HE IS NOW DEAD! ALONG WITH MOST OF HIS RACE! WHO WILL HELP US WITH THE RITUAL IF NOT THEM?

WE CAN

I DO NOT WISH TO SOUND CALLOUS IN THE WAKE OF RECENT EVENTS.

...BUT WE DO NOT REQUIRE ANYTHING OTHER THAN OUR WEAPONS, OURSELVES AND THE ENERGY GIFTED TO US. SUCH IS MY UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROCESS.

HMM. WE SHOULD DO IT SOON

I AM VERY GRATEFUL FOR MATTHEW'S HOSPITALITY. BUT I CANNOT LEAVE EIDEN CRAIG FOR SO LONG WITHOUT--

--WILL YOU CEASE SLIPPING IMAGES INTO MY HEAD?!

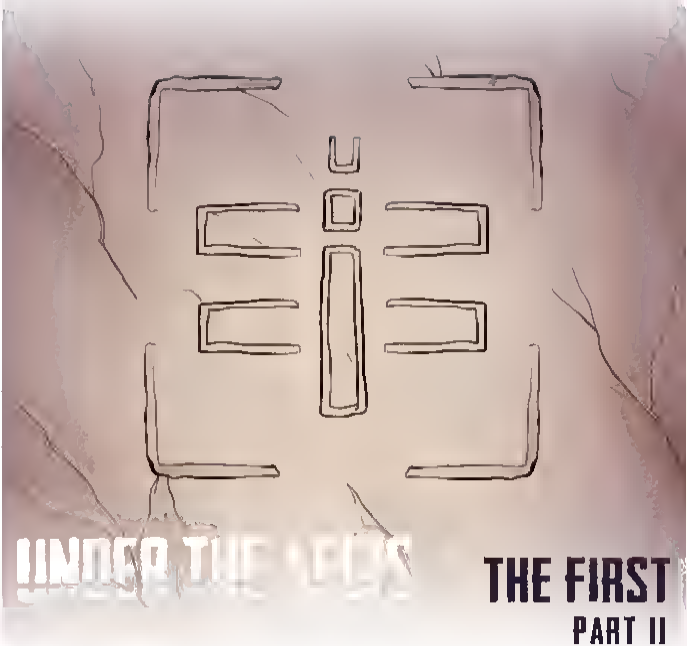
PLEASE. FORGIVE ME. I HAVE YET TO LEARN HOW TO FULLY CONTROL THIS CONNECTION.

IT FEELS SO...ODD TO HAVE ALL THIS VITALITY WITHIN ONESELF AND TO BE LINKED TOGETHER...
I HAVE NEVER FELT ANYTHING LIKE IT, MATTHEW...DESPITE ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED, I BELIEVE YOU WERE RIGHT.
IT PAINS ME TO ADMIT IT, BUT I AGREE. THIS IS BETTER THAN ANY FLIMSY, PAPER ALLIANCE.

WHICH IS WHY THE RITUAL MUST BE COMPLETED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

IF OUR PEOPLE WERE TO ONLY HAVE A TASTE OF THIS, OF WHAT WE ARE EXPERIENCING NOW...

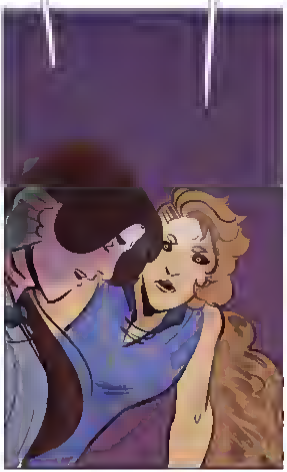
...WE HAVE TO SHOW THEM
THAT WE ARE ALL EQUAL


UNDER THE
THE FIRST
PART II

HAVE A CARE, OR YOU WILL CATCH A CHILL, YOUR MAJESTY.
OH, BARONESS.
YOU KNOW FULL WELL I CAN TOLERATE THE COLD JUST AS WELL AS YOU. BUT I THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERN.
HM. AS POLITE AND ALOOF AS ALWAYS.

GWEN PLEASE NOT NOW

THEN *WHEN*? HOW LONG ARE WE TO DANCE AROUND EACH OTHER IN THIS FASHION?



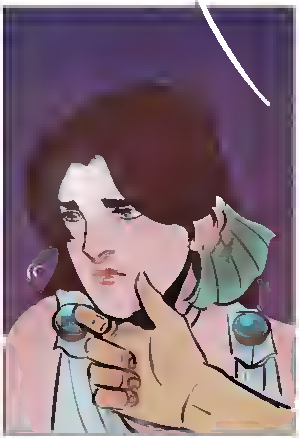
HOW MANY TIMES MUST WE BATTLE BEFORE YOU SEE HOW PERFECT AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN US CAN BE? ESPECIALLY NOW THAT WE HAVE THESE SYMBOLS ON OUR FOREHEADS?

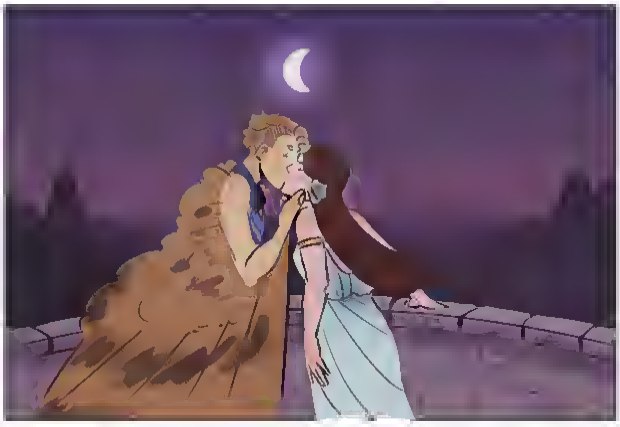
I CANNOT BE SELFISH

YOU NEVER FAIL TO PUT YOUR SUBJECTS FIRST. THEY ARE LOYAL AND FIERCE IN THEIR LOVE FOR YOU. BUT YOU HAVE WANTS AND FEELINGS. YOU ARE NOT MADE OF STONE!

...AND NEITHER AM I.

ONDINE...





GWEN...I--

NOOOO!
WHAT WAS THAT!?
IT SOUNDS LIKE ELIAS!

YOU ARE CERTAIN, ELIAS?

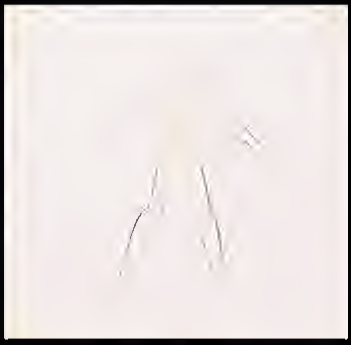
I AM.

DID YOU SEE WHO DID IT? THAT IS--WHO *WILL* DO IT?

NO...IT IS DIFFICULT TO PUT INTO WORDS...

I FEEL MY THROAT BEING SLIT

AND THEN...AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING LIGHT.



WARMTH...LOVE...BUT ALSO FEAR.

OUR WEAPONS BEING PASSED TO NEWBORNS

INFANTS BEARING OUR MARKS

I AM CONFUSED

WILL WE BATTLE WITH EACH OTHER? ONE OF US IS TO EVENTUALLY SLAY YOU--?

NO, IT IS AN OUTSIDER

IT IS DIFFICULT TO EXPLAIN. BUT AS I VENTURED INTO THAT BRIGHT LIGHT, I FELT ALL OF YOU WITH ME. THERE WAS NO CONFLICT AMONG US

BUT...WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

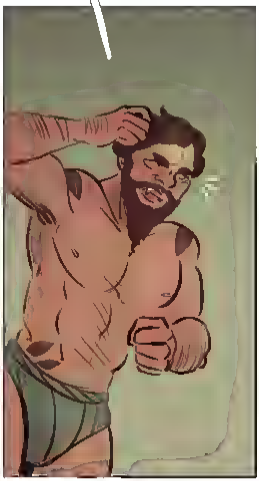
I BELIEVE WE SHOULD COMPLETE THE RITUAL BEFORE ANYTHING SHOULD HAPPEN TO ELIAS--

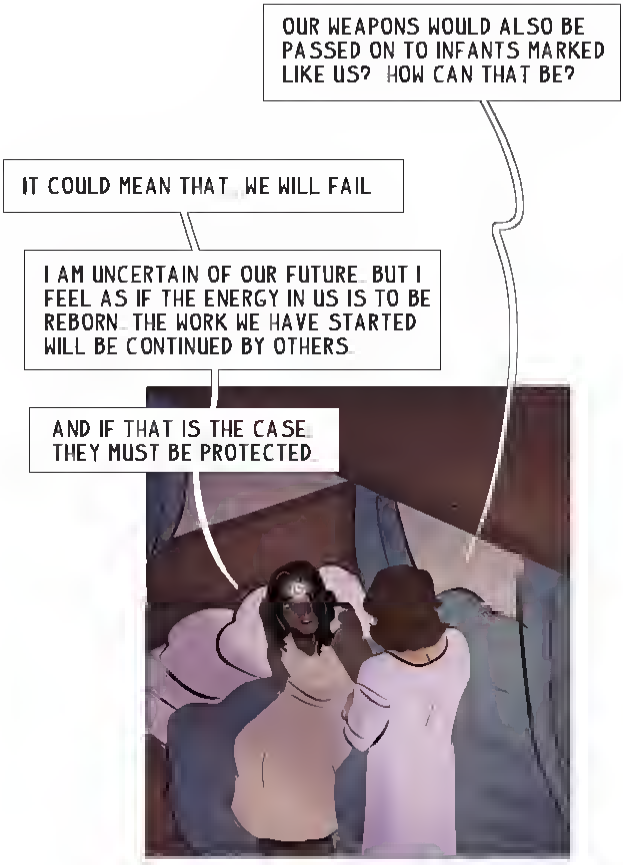
I FEAR THAT THE POWER WE WIELD MAY HAVE CONNECTED US MORE THAN WE KNOW OR UNDERSTAND

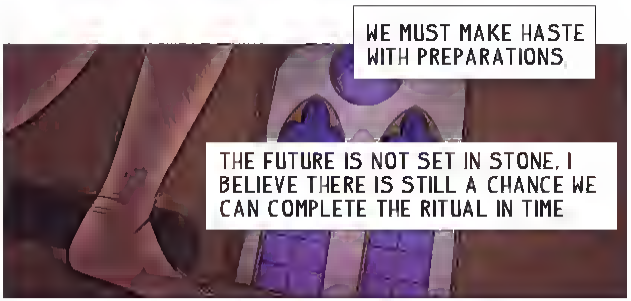
I...I THINK THAT MY DEATH IS A GRAVE INTERRUPTION TO THE FLOW OF ENERGY THROUGH US

ARE YOU SAYING WE MAY NOT SURVIVE IT?

I KNEW THERE WAS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THIS MAGIC!




OUR WEAPONS WOULD ALSO BE PASSED ON TO INFANTS MARKED LIKE US? HOW CAN THAT BE?
IT COULD MEAN THAT WE WILL FAIL
I AM UNCERTAIN OF OUR FUTURE. BUT I FEEL AS IF THE ENERGY IN US IS TO BE REBORN. THE WORK WE HAVE STARTED WILL BE CONTINUED BY OTHERS.
AND IF THAT IS THE CASE, THEY MUST BE PROTECTED.


WE MUST MAKE HASTE WITH PREPARATIONS
THE FUTURE IS NOT SET IN STONE, I BELIEVE THERE IS STILL A CHANCE WE CAN COMPLETE THE RITUAL IN TIME

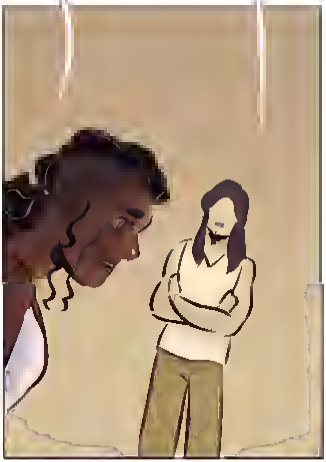
BUT, ALL THE SAME WE OUGHT TO DISCERN A WAY TO INSTRUCT OUR PEOPLE IN THE EVENT THAT SOMETHING SHOULD HAPPEN TO US AND WE MUST DO IT *DISCREETLY*

FOR THERE COULD BE AN ASSASSIN AT OUR BACKS

THERE WAS SO MUCH LIGHT

AND ANCIENT SYMBOLS ON THE GROUND?

YES. CUT INTO THE STONE. THAT'S WHERE WE HAVE TO GO. THAT'S WHERE THE FINAL RITUAL WILL HAPPEN.



YOU'RE SURE THAT WE FINISH IT?

I DON'T KNOW. BUT IT FELT LIKE WE WERE AT THE RIGHT PLACE

AND DID YA SEE...WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO US?

I..I DON'T--

WE SHOULD ALL
GET SOME REST

GOODNIGHT.